

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 152 187

HE 009 771

TITLE Clientrelated Supervision. R & D for Higher Education

INSTITUTION National Swedish Board of Universities and Colleges, Stockholm. Research and Development Unit.

PUB DATE 78

NOTE 10p.; Best copy available

AVAILABLE FROM National Board of Universities and Colleges, R & D Unit, P O Box 45501, S-104 30 Stockholm, Sweden

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$1.67 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Clinical Experience; *Field Experience Programs; *Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Literature Reviews; *Practicum Supervision; Program Evaluation; Supervisory Methods; *Supervisory Training

IDENTIFIERS *Sweden

ABSTRACT

The general aim of the project reported here was to collect information and experience on supervision and training in higher education programs that include practical experience with clients and patients. Information was collected from a survey of the literature and by empirical studies. Another aim was to determine what problems went along with such programs and how these problems might be solved. (Author/MSE)

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R & D for Higher Education

INFORMATION ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

CONCLUDED PROJECT

1978:1

TITLE OF PROJECT: Clientrelated supervision

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BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

This project originated at a time when questions concerning vocational emphasis in education and questions concerning practical training were attracting increasing interest. Various investigations concerning university and college education were made but they primarily focused on organizational aspects. Little if any attention was paid to the question how students can be benefited by the knowledge and experience of their supervisor. This being so, it seemed natural to investigate existing university programs involving a great deal of practical training. When the project started there had been an intensification of a debate in mass media concerning the impersonal and mechanical treatment given to many people seeking assistance and care from various institutions, nursing and treatment centres and official bureaux. Therefore, educational programs where clients or patients are involved became of special interest. The interaction within the triad of supervisor, client and trainee was taken as the starting point of the project.

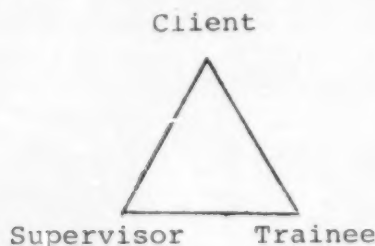


Figure 1. The interaction between supervisor, client and trainee.

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In connection with clientrelated work, however, guidance and instruction often occur in situations in which also other persons take part. Nevertheless, the triad formed by supervisor, client and trainee can be regarded as fundamental to instruction involving client contact.

One of the direct impulses to outline a project plan came from discussions with supervisors who among other things asked for literature on clientrelated supervision in various educational programs. At the start of the project in 1971, there was hardly any literature of this kind available in Swedish.

The general aim of the project was to collect knowledge and experience concerning supervision and training in educational programs in higher education which include practice that involve contacts with clients or patients. Information was to be collected by the survey of literature and by empirical studies. The aim was also to compare different experiences to see if there were any problems common to different programs and, in that case, how these problems were solved or might be solved.

THE CONDUCT OF THE PROJECT

Pilot studies

As the field which we were going to study was a wide one and difficult to tackle we decided to start with three pilot studies. They were to comprise one intensive and one extensive empirical study and an initial search for literature. The intensive study focused on a practical task in dental training. A number of variables were observed, including the interaction between patient, supervisor and trainee. An attempt at cross-validation was made in the following year. The extensive study involved a survey of practicums in the training of psychologists with respect to supervisory resources, the content of the practical training, desiderata etc. This survey concerned supervisor opinions and was conducted by means of an inquiry.

Main studies

The main studies consisted of a questionnaire survey and digests of the literature reviewed.

In the light of experience derived from the intensive and extensive studies two questionnaires were compiled. One of them was directed to supervisors taking part in the training of social workers, psychologists, speech therapists, physiotherapists, doctors and dentists, and the other was addressed to students in the final stages of these programs. The questionnaires investigated procedures, problems and

demands in connection with practical work under supervision. They were sent to 84 supervisors and 212 trainees, and they were completed by 95 per cent of the former and 72 per cent of the latter. One striking feature of the replies was that both groups underlined the importance of such aspects of the supervisory situation as information and discussions regarding the goals and purposes of the training. Both groups felt, moreover, that an opportunity should be provided for a concluding discussion between supervisor and trainee concerning the trainee's performance in his practical work. Some kind of course evaluation was also commended. Differences of opinion between the two groups mainly concerned the occurrence or non-occurrence of certain elements of practical instruction. In only a few questions did differences between various disciplines leave their mark on the response pattern.

The preliminary search for literature furnished guidelines for a further review of literature and for the structuring of the content of the literary survey which constitutes the second main study. To a great extent the material in the digests came to be dominated by literature in the English language. This is due to the documental systems used (e.g. ERIC, MEDLARS and Current Contents) and to the relatively great interest in supervision displayed by psychotherapist and counsellor educators in North America. Most of the material has been presented in reports with the subtitles Goals, Methods and Evaluation. The following are some of the questions covered:

- How can individuals and training systems relate or adjust to the growth of knowledge and the rapid transformation of professional roles?
- Can educational goals be defined for client-related supervision and, if so, how?
- When and where does the practical training take place?
- What is the work situation of a supervisor like, and what are the demands on a supervisor?
- Is it advisable that trainees supervise one another?
- What arrangements could be used for the training of predominantly psychomotor, cognitive and psychosocial skills?
- How is evaluation conducted as to individual performances and as to the training system itself?

In addition, a special study was made of literature concerning possibilities to arrange an initial training in interviewing. This field was considered particularly relevant to educational programs involving contact with clients.

Applied studies

Some preliminary studies were carried out within the project in order to try out parts of a program for interviewing training. The choice of program (Ivey & Gluckstern, Basic Attending Skills) was followed by tentative translations and recordings of model video tapes. Among other things the training method chosen focuses on single skills, video presentations and group discussions. The studies were carried out in three different groups comprising 38 persons altogether.

RESULTS

Pilot studies

The empirical pilot studies yielded information specific to the schools investigated. In retrospective, the most important thing was that the studies made us more familiar with the conditions in which supervision takes place. Among other things they showed that the working conditions of supervisors and trainees varied a great deal, not only between different disciplines but also within one and the same educational program.

Main studies

With the aid of the questionnaire survey and the review of literature, we attempted to identify salient problems. Four of these will be mentioned here. They concern (a) the co-ordination of theory and practice, (b) the relationship between supervisor and trainee, (c) psychosocial training and (d) the lack of knowledge as to the impact of the total training environment on the future practitioner.

(a) Many trainees feel that the co-ordination between theory and practice is inadequate. This is apparent from the results of the questionnaire survey which was carried out among trainee groups in late 1974 and early 1975. The trainees had recently concluded or were in the final stages of their training, and their answers referred to the arrangement of their training as a whole. Ninety-five per cent of the trainees stated that there were deficiencies in the co-ordination between theoretical and practical parts. Many of them seemed to think that these deficiencies were the most unsatisfactory

aspect of their training. Problems of co-ordination can be referred to three areas: poor integration of the contents, inappropriate sequence and inappropriate allocation of time between the different parts of training. The integration of content was criticized, for example, on the grounds that theory and practice had different aims, theoretical training did not provide sufficient preparation for practice, practice periods were not sufficiently followed up in the theoretical instruction repetitions were given instead of supplementation, and that the training did not correspond to the everyday demands of the profession concerned. The sequence of different periods of training was considered unsatisfactory in cases where practical items were found to precede theoretical reviews and where a long time elapsed between theoretical and practical phases with similar content. The most frequent observation concerning unsuitable allocation of time was that insufficient time was devoted to the practical training.

The review of literature revealed a variety of efforts which had been made to deal with co-ordination problems of these kinds. These efforts ranged from letting the trainee follow the daily work of a professional from an early stage of training to giving the trainees a great deal of their practical instruction at the training establishment through the medium of role play and other simulated training situations. In between these two procedures there were various ways of alternating theoretical and practical studies.

One important variable connected with efforts to co-ordinate theory and practice is apparently the localization of the practical training in terms of its proximity to the school or the field. Another important factor is the nature of the communication between different groups, e.g. supervisors and other members of the teaching staff. In co-ordinating theory and practice due attention must of course also be given to the time and situation where clients, without any infringement on their rights, could participate in sessions which to some extent involve training or instruction of trainees.

(b) The relationship between supervisor and trainee usually changes from one stage to another during the training. The relationship between them is also coloured by the attitudes of the individual supervisor and trainee to the supervisory situation.

The characteristics stressed by the trainees in the questionnaire survey as important attributes of a supervisor included "openness", "empathy", "a sense of equality and friendship" as well as "having time", i.e. the very things which have an important bearing

on the relationship between a supervisor and a trainee. The trainees also stated that it was important that the supervisors followed their work with clients and gave support and instructions. Most of the students also found it essential to be given opportunities to discuss the goals of the training, the teaching of the schools/supervisors and their own performance. In the supervisors' questionnaire many stated that opportunities of discussion were provided. The trainees did not always share this opinion.

According to the literature in this field, supervisors display a wide variety of attitudes towards their students. These attitudes can somewhat schematically be said to represent a didactic approach that centers around instruction and an experiential approach to supervision. Briefly, the didactic model is cognitive and oriented towards teaching and learning. It is aimed at the conveyance of information, the development of techniques and the provision of feedback. Supervision of this kind becomes a deliberate attempt to equip the future practitioner with a suitable behavioural repertoire. The experiential model is opposite to the didactic model in many respects. It has a conative and developmental orientation. Instead of content and techniques it emphasizes attitudes, feelings and relations. Instead of diagnosing and assessing performance it seeks to accept and understand. It emphasizes the trainee's need for security and liberty to experiment on his own.

Many researchers advocate one or other of these two models, but there are also those who advocate a combination of a didactic and an experiential approach. Comparing the statements of the trainees given above with the two models, one finds that such a combination is desirable. Of course, when applying any of the models due provision must be made for the security and rights of the third party, i.e. the client or the patient.

(c) Concerning the psychosocial training in the different programs, 90 per cent or more of the 153 trainees responding to the questionnaire stated that in their opinion it was important that instruction and guidance should be given concerning :

- How to collect information from clients.
- How to apprehend the clients' reactions to their problems.
- How to apprehend the clients' reactions to the treatment of their problems.
- How to inform and instruct clients.

There were, however, individual trainees who took the view that different aspects of personal relationships could not be taught. The proportion of trainees stating that they had received instruction in the four areas mentioned above varied between 22 and 46 per cent. The first of these figures refers to the apprehension of the clients' reactions to the treatment of their problems and the latter to the collection of information. There were no great differences in the distribution of the answers received from trainees in different programs involving client-related training.

The trainees' replies also showed that they did not prefer one particular form of instruction but could conceive of several different forms. The types of learning situations most commonly mentioned by the trainees were: group discussions among students and supervisors in connection with different cases, informal discussions between supervisor and trainee in connection with the client-related work, and group dynamic training sessions. The replies also referred to role playing, video-taped training interviews, the reading of special literature and demonstrations by qualified supervisors.

Briefly, both the questionnaire survey and the review of literature showed that greater attention need to be paid to questions concerning personal relations to clients/patients, that efforts should be made to vary training and instruction, and that many different aspects of a professional personal relation should be attended to. In keeping with this view, training in interviewing was selected as a field for an applied study within the project.

(d) The review of literature pointed to the need for an investigation of the way in which the individual grows into and eventually assumes a professional role, i.e. the socialization process with regard to the professional role. Practical work under the guidance of a supervisor, involving contact with clients or patients, plays an important part in this process, as does regular instruction. But the development of the trainee's knowledge and skills and of his attitudes towards the profession as well as towards man and society is also influenced by the organization of the attended school and institutes. All the contacts - both formal and informal - occurring during the training are of importance for this development. There are considerable difficulties involved in trying to predict, when candidates are admitted for training, which of them will, for example, be interested in and concerned about people's problems later on in their professional lives. Attention should therefore focus on the total influence that the training period itself has on the future practitioner. This should be a way to make sure that suitable people

enter the profession. The review of literature revealed a number of instances where efforts had been made to study professional socialization.

Applied studies

The applied studies comprised try-outs of a program in interviewing training. The chosen program, which emphasizes the training of single skills, was well received by most of the participants. All but one person (who refrained from answering the question) stated that they considered the method employed a suitable way of learning interviewing. When an inquiry was made among sixteen students training to be psychologists, fifteen said that they would like to take part in further try-outs with the program.

Efforts were made to assess the impact of the training on the individual, using three different instruments (so-called behavioral counts and translations of the Counselor Effectiveness Scale, and of Truax's and Carkhuff's rating scales). It proved quite difficult to arrive at reliable assessments. It would be very interesting, however, if one could eventually evaluate the importance that this or similar types of interviewing training would have for the general public.

COMMENTS

Since the project started, general interest has increased as to the practical aspects of educational programs. Similarly, more and more attention is being paid to the interpersonal relations in teaching, training and professional practice. A great deal of developmental work and practical field work still remains to be done, however, before training involving client and patient contacts will match the demands which society and the individual can be expected to make in the future.

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